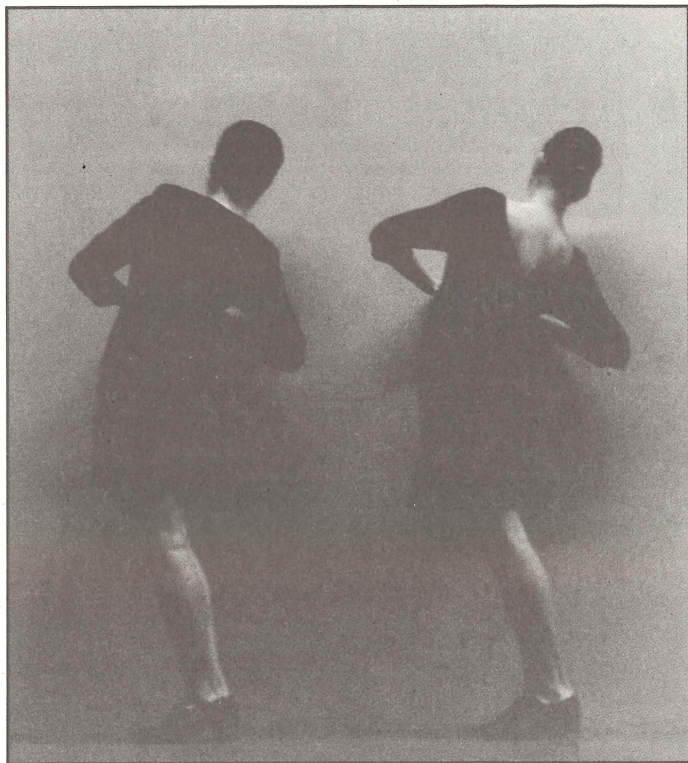


Learning to dance is primarily to mold the body into a fluid and transparent state, as to express ideas or emotions in an art form.

Doris Humphrey, 1929



TRADITION AND CHANGE IN PORTUGUESE CHILDREN'S DANCING GAMES *

Fernanda Magno Prim

Traditional music, and other related arts such as dance and literature, have attracted a special interest from educators in the second half of this century. Children's singing and dancing games have been one subject of this research.

In Portugal, as in other countries, research began in the last years of 19th century; however, even today, the motor and spoken elements of these games have received greater attention than the musical aspects. Indeed, there are a number of works describing the movements, but the musical notation has been presented by only a few authors. This is in fact a regrettable loss, knowing that music, movement and words co-exist in these games as an inseparable whole.

Oral repertoires are not static. They change one or more of their components, or disappear completely, in response to social change. Naturally, the old games that disappear may be replaced by others, often fulfilling similar functions.

Theory & Problem

Knowing that children's games are not, at least in part, the same as those of fifty years ago, it is important to know how the games have changed the related musical and motor behaviours.

According to Roberts and Sutton-Smith (1971), games are defined as organized playing involving competition, two or more sides, criteria for determining the winner, and agreed upon rules. Some activities which involve song, dance and drama, are considered games because they are organized, have a fixed sequence of actions and an outcome. In fact, they are more cooperative than competitive; although, being the central person is a form of "winning", while never being chosen is a form of "losing".

The difference between play and games is, sometimes, difficult to establish. According to Helen Schwartzman (1978), play is pleasurable and enjoyable, unproductive and without "real" consequences in life, and occurs in a separate space and time. Games are more conventionalized, formalized or institutionalized forms of play, characterized by explicit rules clearly articulated, understood and accepted by all participants, and they are not necessarily identified by the production of a differential outcome. Jean Chateau, Roger Caillois, Huizinga and Sutton-Smith were some of the researchers who have studied play and games.

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Children distinguish play from reality, but use objects and situations to create their own world. This activity is crucial to cognitive development because the process of creating imaginary situations leads to the development of abstract thought (Vygotsky in Schwartzman, 1978). Later, children use this practice for solving problems. Piaget(1970) defined the intellectual development of a child as the balance between "assimilation" and "accommodation", the first being the incorporation of new situations in cognitive structures already present, and the second the transformation of a structure already present as a reply to the environment. Games are essentially assimilation, or assimilation addressing to accommodation.

The Musical Development of Child

Briefly, we can say that children distinguish and copy short melodies (Moog,1976), and explore and experiment with vocal and instrumental sounds (Sensory developmental mode - Swanwick and Tillman, 1986). At the age of 3 to 4, they begin to be interested in games involving music and movement, can beat a pulse (Moog, 1976) that is becoming more and more regular and develop a personal expression in vocal music, exploring changes of speed and intensity about a year later (Personal expressiveness - Swanwick and Tillman, 1986). At 6 years they repeat the same songs; insert known fragments into spontaneous songs, and use simple, binary rhythmic formulas, although they can copy more difficult models (Moog, 1976), while ignoring the harmony (Zennati, 1975; Moog, 1976). A tonal acculturation of a melodic type is acquired at about 7 to 8 years (Zennati, 1975); at this time, children will follow the established conventions, and repeat patterns (Vernacular developmental mode - Swanwick and Tillman, 1986). At 8 - 10 years, tonal acculturation is established and during the same period (Zenatti, 1975), and up to the age of 11, children modify conventions, explore structural possibilities, and try contrasts (Speculative developmental mode - Swanwick and Tillman, 1986).

The Motor Development of Child

Reviewing literature on the subject, we can assume that children walk and jump with one foot ahead of the other at 2 years (Rigal, 1979; Cratty 1986). At 3 - 4 years they run, improve walking and hop; move feet, mouth, head, arms and hands (Moog, 1976). At 4 - 5 years they begin to walk forward and backwards, throw and hold (Cratty, 1986); they run and control the beginning, the pause and the changing of direction (Rigal, 1979), and can hop, clap, balance legs, trunk, arms and head (Moog, 1976). Jumping, throwing and holding with good performance comes at 6 years (Rigal, 1979). At 7 years, children have acquired the spa-

cial orientation and can recognize topological, projective and metrical relationships. Perception of time comes at 7 - 8 years, with the understanding of relationships of order and duration (Paoletti, 1979).

The musical and motor development are not independent. Music exists in space and time, the same as movement. The improvement of movements in time, assures the consciousness of the rhythm of music. Marching is an element that cannot be separated from the vocal rhythm, and helps to coordinate gesture and group activity.

The following paper is the result of a research developed in 1992, based on a collection of singing/moving games recorded in 1989, their analysis and study

Methodology

Most of the games of this collection were recorded in Campo Maior, a county situated in the middle east of Portugal, close to the Spanish frontier

Sample A was informed by 157 children aged 8 up to 11 years: 97 girls and 60 boys, grouped in different numbers according to the needs of each game. These children showed the games they use to play at the time (89).

Sample B was informed by 29 adults, aged 45 up to 59 years, born in Campo Maior and having lived there at least to 10 years. They were grouped in three to fives, in order to facilitate memory and overcome shyness. These people showed the games they used to play when they were 8 - 10 olds.

All the games had been taught by older children, parents or grandparents and played with friends, in the school playgrounds during the breaks, at home or in the street.

Data collection

The games presented by the children were filmed on video; those presented by adults were tape-recorded, as well as the discussion that accompanied the remembering of the games. All were transcribed into musical notation, with the description of the movement, text, and gesture; the last one was written by means of a special code, as well as other information about numbers of participants, accessories, age, date, etc. The study of the music, motor and speech behaviour was done by means of a grid we developed for this purpose (Table 1).

Results

Sample A gives the position of 1989, with 60 games. Sample B expresses years 40/50, with 35 games. In a first general analysis, we find that the two lists

Title										Number									
MUSIC																			
Melodic Structure										Rhythmic Structure						Form			
Indeterminate pitch		Determinate pitch								Meter		Measure		Rhythmic elements					
		Range		Used degrees		System													
Totality <input type="checkbox"/>		4th <input type="checkbox"/>		I <input type="checkbox"/> V <input type="checkbox"/>		Tonal <input type="checkbox"/>		Binary <input type="checkbox"/>		2/4 <input type="checkbox"/>									
		5th <input type="checkbox"/>		II <input type="checkbox"/> VI <input type="checkbox"/>		Modal <input type="checkbox"/>		Ternary <input type="checkbox"/>		3/4 <input type="checkbox"/>									
		6th <input type="checkbox"/>		III <input type="checkbox"/> VII <input type="checkbox"/>		Ambig. <input type="checkbox"/>		Irreg. <input type="checkbox"/>		4/4 <input type="checkbox"/>									
Part <input type="checkbox"/>		7th <input type="checkbox"/>		IV <input type="checkbox"/>				Mixed <input type="checkbox"/>		6/8 <input type="checkbox"/>									
		8th <input type="checkbox"/>																	
		9th <input type="checkbox"/>																	
MOVEMENT																			
Starting position		Locomotor movement						Nonlocomotor movement				Rhythmic structure		Form		Final position			
		Actions		Space				Body		Gesture		Phrasing							
				Directions		Trajectory													
Circle <input type="checkbox"/>		Walk <input type="checkbox"/>		Forward <input type="checkbox"/>		Curved <input type="checkbox"/>		Head <input type="checkbox"/>		Hold <input type="checkbox"/>				Circle <input type="checkbox"/>					
Bow <input type="checkbox"/>		Run <input type="checkbox"/>		Backward <input type="checkbox"/>		Straight <input type="checkbox"/>		Trunk <input type="checkbox"/>		Beat <input type="checkbox"/>				Bow <input type="checkbox"/>					
Half circ. <input type="checkbox"/>		Skip <input type="checkbox"/>		Upward <input type="checkbox"/>		Twisted <input type="checkbox"/>		Arms <input type="checkbox"/>		Press <input type="checkbox"/>				Half circ. <input type="checkbox"/>					
Face to f. <input type="checkbox"/>		Gallop <input type="checkbox"/>		Downward <input type="checkbox"/>				Legs <input type="checkbox"/>		Stretch <input type="checkbox"/>				Face to f. <input type="checkbox"/>					
		Jump <input type="checkbox"/>		Sideward <input type="checkbox"/>				Hands <input type="checkbox"/>		Bend <input type="checkbox"/>				Side by s. <input type="checkbox"/>					
Side by s. <input type="checkbox"/>		Hop <input type="checkbox"/>		Diagonal <input type="checkbox"/>				Feet <input type="checkbox"/>		Pull <input type="checkbox"/>				Disperse <input type="checkbox"/>					
		Leap <input type="checkbox"/>						Fing. <input type="checkbox"/>		Twist <input type="checkbox"/>									
								Shake <input type="checkbox"/>											

Table 1 - Grid for Analyses

have 20 games in common. The musical and motor behaviours appointed by theoreticians to this range of age, were found as follows:

- the use of melodies or fragments of melodies already known; the exploring of structural possibilities in unexpected changes of tonality and speed; the tonal songs and conclusions with perfect cadence; the singing of traditional songs or others in 3/4 or 6/8 as an imitation of more difficult rhythmic models than those they produce, usually in 2/4 or 4/4;
- actions such as walking, running, skipping or galloping; the capacity of using different parts of the body in steady gestures; the ability of grouping and evolving in different ways; the perception of time in the rhythmic structure of movement; the capacity of synchronizing march, dance, beats and claps with musical rhythm.

It is interesting to point out that some games combine a binary pattern in music with a ternary pattern in movement.

Discussion

On analysing these scores, we find some important differences in the lists of the two time periods: (see Table 2)

Music: pitch do not present important differences; range 8th/9th (33,3 - 6), and number of sounds 6/7 (61,1 - 33,2), went down expressively. On the contrary, range 4th/7th (66,6 - 93,9) and number of sounds 3/5 (38,8 - 66,6), had a significative rise, i.e. children sing less, melodies are poorer with a smaller extension and less varied, mixing singing and speech more than formerly (Figures 1 and 2).

Movement: walk (47,8 - 25) was the only variable to go down clearly; jump, including hop and leap (15,2 - 37,5) and beat (15,3 - 30,5) had risen clearly. These differences are due to clapping and elastic band games, without walking and full of complex forms of beating, jumping, hopping and leaping. Compositional forms are frequently crossed with simultaneous different directions and wide spacial trajectories (Figures 3 and 4).

Accessories : rope (80 - 36,3) and handkerchief (20 - 9) went down; note the appearance of the elastic band game, taking an important place in the whole (0 - 45,4) (Figure 5)

Number of participants: two participants increased significantly (0 - 30,7) while indeterminate number fell down (88,7 - 55,3) (Figure 6).

Relationship of players: the cooperative games rose (48,6 - 56,9); the competitive ones fell (51,4 - 43) (Figure 7).

		1940/1950	1980/1990
Music		%	%
Pitch	Determined	34,2	29,2
	Undetermined	48,5	49,2
	Mixed	17,1	21,5
Range	4th / 7th	66,6	93,9
	8th / 9th	33,3	6
Number of sounds	3 / 5	38,8	66,6
	6 / 7	61,1	33,2
Meter	Binary	69,7	74,6
	Ternary	13,9	8
	Irregular	6,9	9,3
	Mixed	9,3	8

Table 2 - 1. Comparative percentages of Music

		1940/1950	1980/1990
Movement		%	%
Actions	Walk	47,8	25
	Run	19,5	18,7
	Jump	15,2	37,5
	Skip	15,2	16,6
	Gallop	2,1	2
Body	Head	3,2	6,2
	Trunk	11,8	14,5
	Arms	29	26,4
	Hands	33,3	28,5
	Legs	9,6	9,3
	Feet	0	2,5
	Fingers	12,9	12,4
Gesture	Hold	5,1	6,7
	Beat	15,3	30,5
	Press	7,6	3,3
	Stretch	28,2	22
	Bend	28,2	22
	Twist	10,2	8,4
	Shake	5,1	6,7

Table 2 - 2. Comparative percentages of Movement

		1940/1950	1980/1990
Other Items		%	%
Accessories	Rope	80	36,3
	Elastic band	0	45,4
	Handkerchief	20	9
	Stone	0	9
Nr. of part.	Two	0	30,7
	Three	11,4	13,8
	Indeterm.	88,7	55,3
Perform.	Solo	40	33,8
	Choir	8,6	41,5
	Dialog.	51,4	24,6
Relationsh. of players	Cooperat.	48,6	56,9
	Competit.	51,4	43

Table 2 - 3. Comparative percentages of Other Items

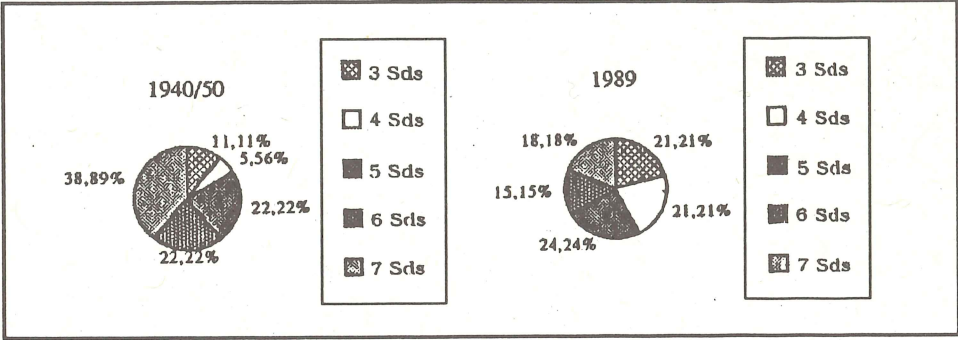


Figure 1 - Number of Sounds

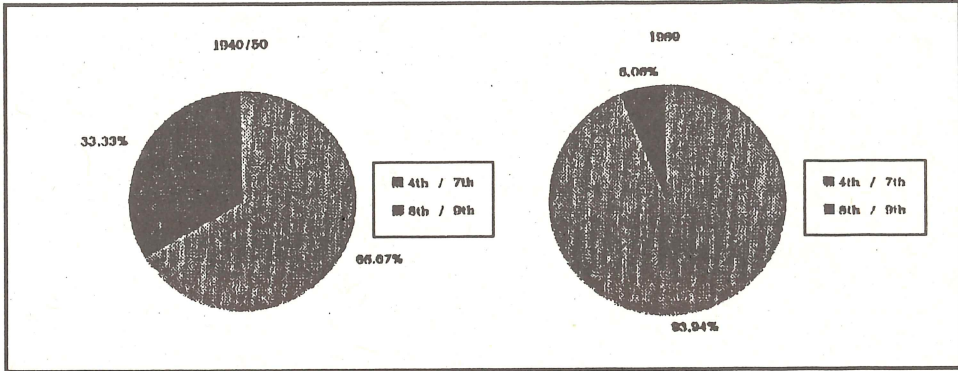


Figure 2 - Range

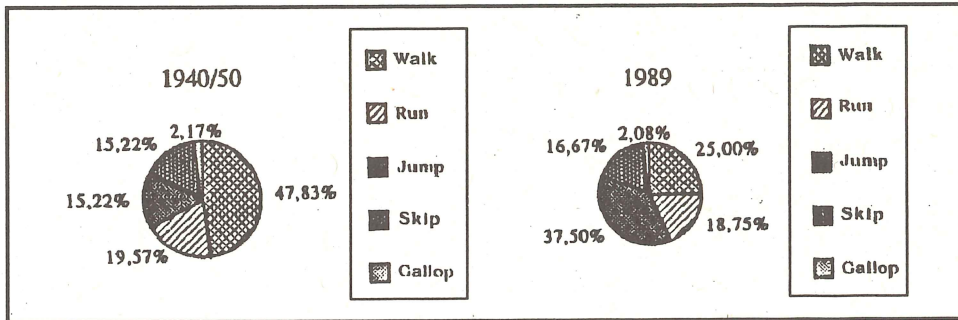


Figure 3 - Actions

We think that the differences in the last two items are due to: first, the great number of clapping games played by two children, that we considered choir in a cooperative and un-competitive way; second, the decrease of singing/dancing rounds, played by indeterminate number of players: specimens registered today belong almost all to the past and are still in use.

These scores lead us to conclude that there is an impoverishment in music, in conjunction with an enrichment in movement, since the forties to the eighties.

The disappearing of choral singing as a school activity and the development of physical activities as well as the influence of pop music, less melodic and more rhythmic, are probably some of the reasons for these results.

Active songs and games produced by children are the beginning of a creative activity in music and dance, that teachers must not ignore. On the contrary the understanding of these musical, and dancing, and oral facts is a valuable element to take into account of education.

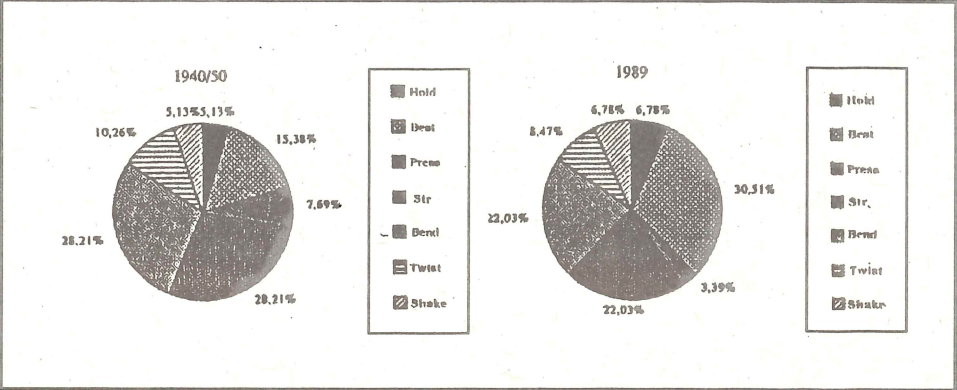


Figure 4 - Gesture

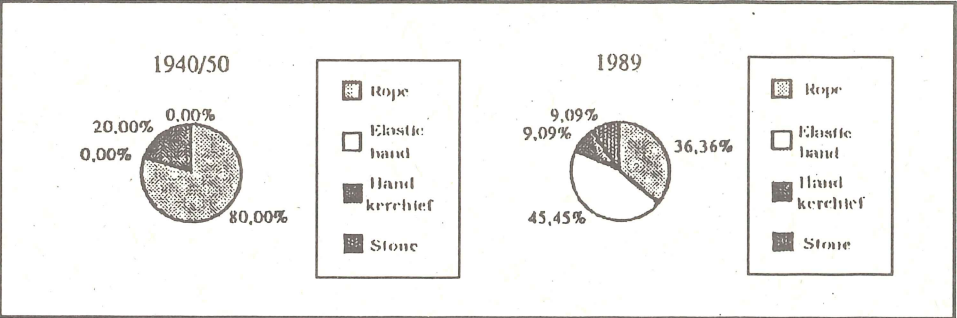


Figure 5 - Acessories

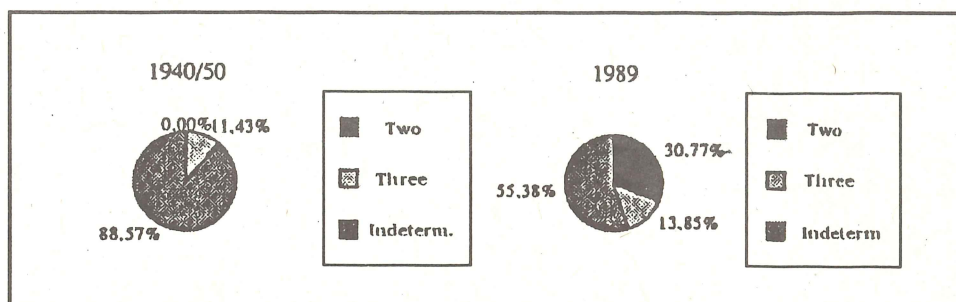


Figure 6 - Number of Participants

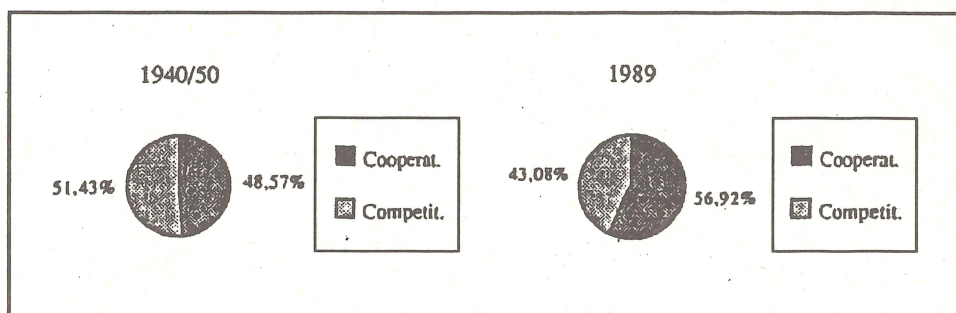


Figure 7 - Relationship of Players

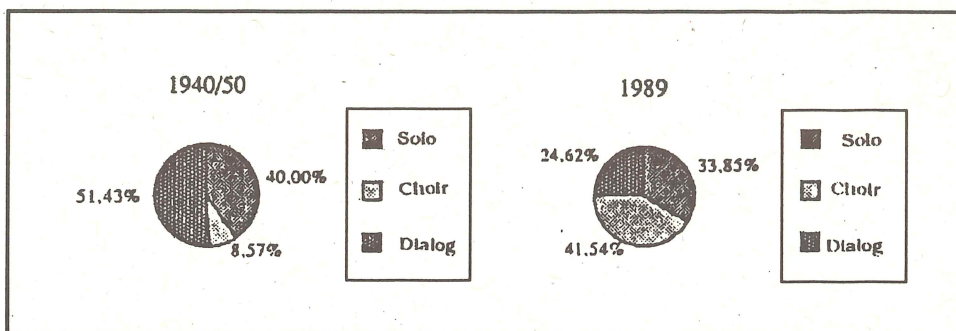


Figure 8 - Performance

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